



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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25 April 2008

### IND102819.E

India: Whether a central registry for persons exists; the introduction of national identity cards  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

A professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas with extensive knowledge of India stated in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that there is no central registry in India, adding that even births are not registered (8 Apr. 2008). In a 2003 report on child labour, Human Rights Watch (HRW) also states that there is no birth registration system in India (Jan. 2003, 18 and 60). More recent corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. In contrast, the United States (US) Department of State reports that it is required that births be registered in almost all states and union territories according to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act of 1969 (n.d.). *The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969*, which is applicable in all of India (India 31 May 1969, 1(2)), stipulates that the State Chief Registrar is responsible for supervising a birth registration system in his or her state (ibid., 4(4)). The National Commission on Population indicates that approximately 55 percent of births are registered and that the level of registration varies from one state to another (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 5). Similarly, the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India states that "[d]espite having the registration of birth [and] death compulsory under the statute, the level of registration of births and deaths under the Act has continued to be far from satisfactory in several states/UTs [union territories]" (India n.d.a). According to a 2004 article in *The Hindu*, approximately 60 percent of births and 50 percent of deaths were registered at that time and the registration of births and deaths was only made compulsory in 2001 (11 July 2004).

This same article states that the government was "considering" implementing national identity cards and that a pilot project was already underway in some states (*The Hindu* 11 July 2004). On its website, the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner indicates that the government is "contemplating" the preparation of a computerized National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), which will be used to issue Multi-purpose National Identity Cards (MNICs) (India n.d.b). The website mentions the *Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003* as a possible legal framework (ibid.). Article 3 of the *Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003* stipulates that the Registrar General of Citizen Registration will "establish and maintain the National Register of Indian Citizens" and Article 4 states that

[t]he Central Government shall, for the purpose of National Register of Indian Citizens, cause to carry throughout the country a house-to-house enumeration for collection of specified particulars relating to each family and individual, residing in a local area including the Citizenship status. (India 10 Dec. 2003)

A pilot project of the MNICs has been conducted in the following states: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the union territory of Pondicherry (India 26 May 2007; ibid. 4 Mar. 2008; *The Sunday Express* 20 Aug. 2006). An article in *The Sunday Express* indicates that this pilot project was approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs in July 2004 (20 Aug. 2006); however, no corroboration could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. The website of the Ministry of Home Affairs states that their Border Management Division is responsible for the pilot project on MNICs (India n.d.c).

According to the legislation, the NRIC "shall contain" the following information for every citizen: name, father's name, mother's name, sex, date of birth, place of birth, residential address, marital status and spouse's name if married, visible identification mark, date of registration of citizen, serial number of registration and national identity number (India 10 Dec. 2003, 3(3)).

A May 2007 press release from the Press Information Bureau (PIB) states that the first set of MNICs were provided to citizens of Pooth Khurd in Delhi (India 26 May 2007; *The Hindu* 27 May 2007). However, a subsequent press release in March 2008 from the PIB states that the government "proposes" to issue MNICs and that, although distribution of cards was supposed to be completed by July 2007, this had not occurred and that it was expected to be completed by March 2008 (India 4 Mar. 2008). An article in the *Hindustan Times* reports that the MNICs will be issued to citizens after the next census in 2011 (6 Apr. 2008).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the

merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** A professor at the Centre for South Asian Studies at the University of Toronto did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Department of Information Technology, Factiva, Foreign Law Guide, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), India Code, *The Indian Express* [Mumbai], Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Ministry of Home Affairs, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *The Pioneer* [New Delhi], *The Statesman* [Kolkata], *The Times of India* [Haryana], *The Tribune* [Chandigarh].

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